

V. Coordinating Workdays

A. Planning

The first step to a successful workday is thorough planning. First, determine a need that will be a good project for the group to focus on. It is good to focus volunteers on something that would be difficult for one or two people to accomplish, but still ensure that first-time volunteers feel a sense of accomplishment at the end of the day. Be sure to match the task with the ability your volunteers have (for example, a high school class would be better suited for a seed collecting day or pulling garlic mustard than a chainsaw project). Who is available to help you? Consider working with other core volunteers to determine what task you will accomplish. This creates a sense of teamwork, passes knowledge of how to make management decisions to others, and opens the door for hearing other people's insights. Set a date when these volunteers can come to help.

Examples of great workday projects are: aspen girdling, invasive plant pulling, seed collecting, and phragmites bundling. A more challenging, but very rewarding, activity is brush removal. Finally, remember that there will probably be something that doesn't go as planned. The goal is not to have a perfect workday but to learn and improve.

Plan what tools you will need and bring extras in case more people show up than expected. If it looks as though you will have more than eight volunteers, you may want to divide up into teams and establish team leaders before the workday so those volunteers can be prepared and thinking ahead. Monitor the weather and be ready to cancel if it looks as though the wind chill is below -20°F, the heat index is above 95°F, there is a risk of thunderstorms or tornados, or there is other inclement weather that will prevent performing the work.

B. Workday advertising

Compose a notice for your workday. Information to include:

- Site
- Task to be performed
- Reason the work is important
- Any training requirements needed
- Date
- Time
- Detailed directions
- What volunteers should wear
- What volunteers should bring
- A cancellation plan
- Contact information

See [Appendix A](#) for the flyer template to use on the SNA volunteer website. You may want to ask volunteers to contact you before coming so you can have an idea of how many people to expect. Send your notice to the regional volunteer coordinator and post it at other locations (local boards, in the paper, etc.). The earlier you can plan, the better others can plan as well. It is beneficial to have a regular schedule so volunteers know when to expect another workday.

There are a couple of ways the event can be advertised. The program has an email list of people who would like to know about future events. The program also has a website – <http://dnr.wi.gov/topic/lands/naturalareas/volunteer.html> – that posts upcoming workdays. If advertisement via internet or email notice is desired, notices for upcoming workdays should be in to the regional volunteer coordinator at least two weeks before the event. The sooner the regional volunteer coordinator knows, the better the event will be advertised. It is preferable that the event be planned at least several months in advance, to get the word out. Fill out the workday advertising template found in [Appendix A](#).

C. Week before

Gather needed materials:

- Sign-up sheets and pens
- Maps or other documents
- Needed tools, equipment, camera, gloves, etc. See below for lists for specific activities.
- First aid kit

D. Day of

Arrive early to the site and get everything operational before others arrive. Welcome volunteers as they arrive and consider assigning an experienced volunteer with the task of welcoming and making sure appropriate forms are signed.

If appropriate, record the amount of herbicide you'll be starting with (for end-of-day calculation).

E. Briefing

Gather everyone and give a briefing before activities start for the day. It is good to include the following:

- Introduce yourself and explain your role as leader of the workday. Allow others to introduce themselves, their background, and interests.
- Show maps and point out any relevant trails.
- Ensure everyone has filled out the appropriate forms.
- Give a quick lesson on why the site is worth working at, what the history of management has been there, the goal of the day, and how the goal will be accomplished. Be sure to set a goal that is achievable.
- Let volunteers know that their work carries out the mission of the State Natural Area Program.
- Talk about the target species and how to identify them.

- Tell volunteers to work at their own pace. Encourage them to take breaks if they need to.
- Discuss safety concerns. Identify potential risks from tools, site hazards, and poisonous plants.
- Inform everyone that you have a first aid kit, emergency numbers, and cell phone.
- If appropriate, emphasize that caution should be taken to avoid trampling native plants.
- As appropriate, make volunteers aware of poison ivy, wild parsnip, or other noxious plants in the area and how to ID them.
- Find out if any participants have any health concerns you should know about (bee sting allergy, diabetes, etc.).
- Assign teams if the group is larger or if teams are helpful.
- Divide into teams in which the team leaders can assign tasks and explain how to operate equipment. Make sure the team leaders physically show volunteers how to identify or do something. (See the attached documents with tips for brush cutting, cedar cutting, and phragmites workdays).

F. Getting the work done

Next comes the action portion of the workday. It takes time for people to settle into their task. It is important that the beginning starts well to spur on the rest of the day. These things are helpful:

- Periodically check in with inexperienced volunteers and/or team leaders.
- Spend the first half hour of the workday watching and checking in with volunteers as they perform their tasks. Ask them how it's going, answer questions they may have, correct their methods. This is a good time to take pictures as you wander around.
- Are workers safe? Watch for signs of fatigue, heat exhaustion, dehydration. Make sure that volunteers using power tools and/or herbicide are watching out for the safety of other volunteers.
- If an assigned task is too much for a volunteer, tactfully change their activity to something less demanding.
- If volunteers are not willing to partake in an activity they view as hazardous, provide another task, or give them a chance to leave with grace.
- Once you are sure volunteers are confident with what they are doing, join in, but be available for any questions or needs.
- Provide encouragement and enthusiastic positive feedback for volunteer work. Point out when positive changes to the landscape are visible.
- Take time to explain what you are doing and why to any interested neighbors or visitors. They may be advocates for your work in the future.

G. Wrap-up

It may be beneficial to schedule a wrap-up at the end of the workday to hear what feedback everyone has and summarize what happened. It gives a sense of completion and accomplishment. Good things to include in a wrap-up are:

- Volunteers appreciate a reward for their hard work, even though they don't expect it. Offer treats and beverages at break time or at the end of the work party. Consider taking participants on a mini-field trip to see high-quality areas, scenic views, or beautiful or unusual plant/animal species. Learning opportunities are

a big plus for volunteering. Remember you don't have to know everything — it's okay to say, "I don't know, I'll get back to you" or to ask others for help.

- End on time.
- Verbally thank every volunteer.
- It is helpful to have a brief feedback time with all volunteers or at least your team leaders to discuss what worked well and what could have been better.

After everyone leaves:

- Make sure you have all tools you started with.
- Record the appropriate information in the online work log and keep other relevant notes. (Herbicide use can easily be recorded by knowing how much you start with and subtracting how much you have left).
- Circle on a map where you worked and include what herbicide you used, how many volunteers were present, and what task you accomplished.

H. Day after

- Send a wrap-up email after you get home to each volunteer summarizing what was accomplished with a picture or two. Including photos from workdays is particularly rewarding to volunteers.
- Store pictures.
- Organize, maintain equipment.

I. Youth guidelines

- One adult supervisor for each 10 juveniles (under the age of 16). Juveniles are not allowed to use herbicides, chainsaws, or help on prescribed burns or other tasks that are deemed hazardous.
- Suggested age-appropriate activities for youth that stewards can use and adjust at their discretion. Time restrictions are also a factor as younger kids should not be expected to work longer than 45 minutes.

Activity	Suggested Minimum Age
Garlic mustard pulling	8
Seed collecting	8
Planting plugs	10
Cutting brush with loppers	10
Cutting brush with bow saws	12
Roadside cleanup	12

(Lake County Forest Preserves Volunteer Handbook)

L. Workday tips

See the following pages for tips on these workdays:

- Brush piling
- Cedar cutting
- Phragmites bundling
- Searching an area for invasive species
- Seed collecting
- Spraying herbicides

Brush Piling Workday Tips

Equipment:

- Cell phone to call county dispatch if burning piles
- Lead Volunteer form
- Workday Roster form
- Propane torches or leaf blower
- Fire starter (matches, lighter, or other)
- Drip torch (optional)
- Appropriate personal protective equipment
- Brushcutters
- Saws
- Loppers (optional in case there are more people than expected)
- Plenty of gas and oil
- Hard hats suggested
- Sleds to carry gear
- Herbicide and sprayers
- Extra chains

Tips:

- There needs to be snow cover around the piles before burning can occur.
- Prep beforehand—get there early, call county dispatch and inform them of your plans and the nearest road intersection if burning piles.
- Do a briefing with everyone.
- Make sure you have enough herbicide and sprayers.
- Work in teams when possible.
- Know the amount of herbicide before work starts so you can record how much was used during the day.
- Use plenty of dye in herbicide so it's easy to see what stems were sprayed.
- Brushcutters are the best tool in smaller stemmed brush areas.

It works well to have piles started beforehand or have a pile starter team of a couple people. Select areas with poor-quality vegetation or excessive shade as locations for brushpiles since a burn scar is left after burning the pile. Keep the footprint of the scar small in size. Do not form a brushpile under low branches or close to the trunk of a desirable tree as the flames may injure or kill the tree.

Brushpile Crew Leader Points:

- Brushpiles should be dense, not spread out (cutting the pile with a chainsaw periodically or cutting brush into smaller chunks before throwing on the pile helps with this). Stack brush in the same direction to help condense the piles.

- Make sure equipment works and is ready beforehand and periodically check in during the workday if someone new is using it.
- One saw/brushcutter to two haulers and one sprayer is a good number to start with (someone with a lopper and a sprayer getting small brush first may be helpful).

Cutter Points

- Make sure someone is treating for you. If you get far ahead, pile instead or wait for the herbicide applicator to catch up.
- It works well to cut up slope, move brush, then come down and repeat.
- Cut stumps low to avoid tripping hazards but high enough that sprayers can see them (above the snow level).
- Watch out for pilers or others moving through the area.
- Cut brush into sizes that pilers can handle.
- Periodically cut up brushpiles so that piles are compact and remain small in size.

Herbicide Applicator Points

- If the workday is near areas that were previously cleared, mark or point out these areas so they don't get sprayed again.
- Cover the entire cambium with herbicide. If there are missed gaps the tree will resprout.
- Note the difference between dead stems (pale) and live stems (have more color and sometimes are green).
- If using PVC dauber, make sure to open valve periodically to ensure enough herbicide is wicking to the tip.
- Herbicide application is the most important job—assign to someone who can pay attention to detail.

Piler Points:

- Try to pile high instead of out to keep piles compact.
- Stack smaller logs and brush parallel to keep the pile compact, making it easier to stack, keeping the burn scar small, and making it easy to burn in the future.

Call county dispatch when you leave to let them know you are finished.

Cedar Cutting Workday Tips

Make sure there is snow cover so that piles can be burned.

Equipment:

- Cell phone to call county dispatch (report your plans and the nearest road intersection to where you are working)
- Lead Volunteer form
- Workday Roster form
- Propane torches or leaf blower
- Fire starter (matches, lighter, or other)
- Wedges and mallet
- Saws
- Plenty of gas and oil
- Hard hats
- Sleds to carry gear
- Herbicide and sprayer
- Extra chains

Tips:

- Wear proper clothing that's okay to get holes in (denim or cloth).
- Any health concerns? Ask about physical fitness level.
- Hard hats needed.
- Steep slopes may be a safety hazard.
- Light pile on the side receiving wind (if west wind, light west side).
- If removing clothing layers, put them away from ashes.

Sawyer (Chainsaw person) Points:

- Let them know what tree species to cut.
- Call out and make sure everyone is aware and out of danger when dropping a tree or rolling it downhill.
- Cedars are hard to drop because they are evenly balanced. Consider using wedges.
- Keep as many limbs on the trees as possible when felling so trees or tree chunks are more efficiently transported.
- For rolling cedars, grab the top to steer.
- Cut cedar into pieces if it's too big to roll down the hill.
- Ideally there are two areas per pile: cutting in one area, piling in another.
- Buck from bottom to top or vice versa (closest to fire to farthest from fire).
- Cut limbs according to pilers' ability/how big tree is.

Thrower Points:

- Give sawyer enough space to work.
- Throw pieces on the fire as opposed to on the sides so the fire doesn't grow too big. Periodically put unburned ends into the fire.

Call county dispatch when you leave to let them know you are finished.

Phragmites Bundling Workday Tips

Equipment:

- Lead Volunteer form
- Workday Roster form
- Baling twine
- Herbicide (Imazapyr)
- Clippers
- Knee boots

Tips:

- Divide into teams of 5. Three bundlers, one clipper, one sprayer.
- Wear rubber boots if ground is soggy.
- If bundlers and clippers will be walking through treated areas, advise them that the treated bundles will have herbicide and dye on the tops and that the dye will stain clothing but usually will wash out.
- Phragmites leaves can be sharp, so they are a safety hazard.

Bundler Points:

- Clipping and bundling is an art.
- Get most of the stems but not every last one (sprayers will get individual ones later).
- Wrap string 2 times around bundle at waist height or so, pull tight, and tie.
- Baler twine works well.
- Bundles should not be too big (so can't cut or are tripping over) or too small (wasting twine).

Clipper Point:

- Cut stems as high and even as possible to provide a flat surface for treating.

Herbicide Applicator Points:

- Need aquatic certification.
- Application of herbicide with a paintbrush works well.
- No surfactant is needed if cut stem treating.

Searching an Area for Invasive Species Workday Tips

Equipment:

- Lead Volunteer form
- Workday Roster form
- 2 rolls of flagging
- Appropriate invasive removal tools (herbicide sprayer, handtools, bags, etc.)
- Map of the site for everyone

- Compass (optional)
- GPS (optional)

Tips:

- Determine boundaries of the area you will work on.
- Assign important roles to people you trust (line leader, flagger).
- A line leader is the person who starts a line by walking along a designated boundary. Everyone else follows them, apart from each other so all of the ground is surveyed.
- The second person follows the line leader, stopping if they get ahead of them, helping the line leader remove invasives if necessary. The second person keeps an eye on the third person and makes sure they don't get too far ahead of them, communicating relevant information to them and helping remove invasives if necessary.
- The third person follows the second person the same as the second follows the line leader. This continues down the line to the flagger.
- If a large invasive patch is encountered, multiple people may need to converge on the patch. The people in front of someone who finds a patch are responsible for asking if help is needed when they are free to help.
- The flagger hangs flags on trees or grass as they travel, marking an outside line of coverage. They put more flags up when vegetation is dense so they can find their way back.
- Once the end of a pass is reached, everyone swings around the flagger with the flagger's role switching to the line leader and the line leader becoming the flagger.

Seed Collection Workday Tips

(adapted from Michigan Natural Areas Preservation)

Equipment:

- Lead Volunteer form
- Workday Roster form
- Cloth or leather gloves
- Sturdy footwear
- Long pants
- Safety glasses
- Paper or poly bags or plastic milk jugs, cut for collection
- Permanent marker
- Pruners/scissors
- Map of the site for everyone (if spread over a large area)

Tips:

- Scout the site beforehand to determine what you will collect and where you will collect it.
- Focus on good ID of native seeds to be collected. Show what seed looks like when ripe and ready to be collected.
- Show how to collect seeds (every plant has different seed collection method).
- Let volunteers know how much of the seed to collect. (Before the workday, talk with staff about how much of the seed to collect and how much to leave on the plant. Depending on the time of year and the species of plant and the site you may be collecting anywhere from ¼ of all the seeds to everything you can find.)
- If collecting one thing, suggest volunteers pick that species as a reference to help identify it.
- Supervise closely for the first ½ hour to 1 hour of the workday to confirm that volunteers:
 - know what the target species look like
 - know how to collect them
 - know what to do with them after collection
- This is a good time to take photos!
- Once you are sure volunteers are confident with species ID, join in on the collecting but be available for any questions or needs.

Spraying Invasives Workday Tips

Equipment:

- Lead Volunteer form
- Workday Roster form
- Chemical resistant gloves
- Sturdy footwear
- Long pants
- Safety glasses
- Backpack sprayers
- Plenty of water for spraying
- Herbicide
- Surfactant
- Dye
- Wash water and soap
- Spill kit
- Chemical applicator signs
- Herbicide label
- Tools for equipment breakdowns

Tips:

- Think of other work options for people who do not wish to use herbicides.
- At the beginning, demonstrate the proper safety procedures and how to mix the herbicide.
- Divide into teams of no more than 5 with one leader.
- The team leader will initially observe their group to check:
 - Safety techniques
 - Avoiding unnecessary drift
 - Only the target species is being sprayed
 - **Sprayers should not spray anything they are unsure of—ask their team leader if they are unsure.**
- To record the appropriate amount of herbicide, determine the beginning amount or tell everyone to keep track of how much they spray.
- Make sure there is enough dye to see what has been sprayed.
- If appropriate, cover areas similar to the searching for an area workday.

References:

Michigan Natural Areas Preservation

Smith, T. 2001. "Lake County Forest Preserve District Volunteer Steward's Manual."

The Nature Conservancy